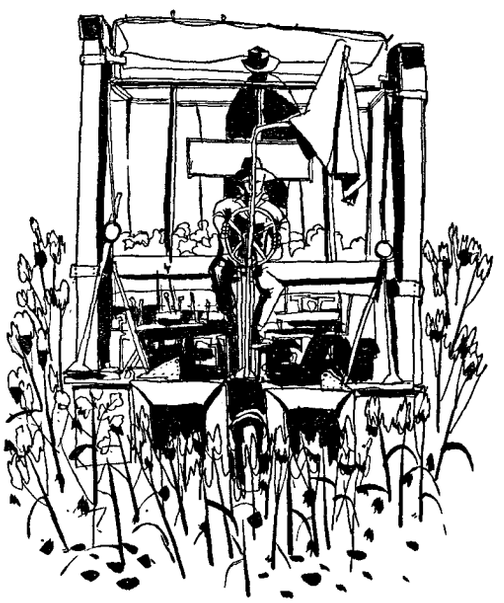
CHILDREN'S BOOKS
—Claire Huchet Bishop

THE

Commonweal



CASE FOR THE FARMER

by James Hearst

POVERTY ON THE LAND

by John Stanley

Spiritual Pilgrimage

by Douglas Hyde

Volume LXIII, No. 7 November 18, 1955 Twenty

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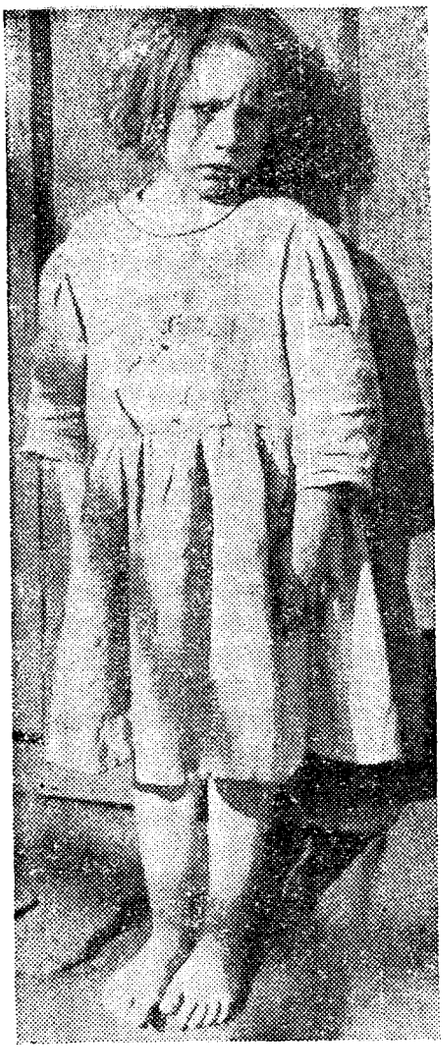

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The Commonweal

week by week

WISHING-WELL DIPLOMACY

INTO the gloomy symphony of our current international problems came two disturbingly cheerful notes, both emitted, surprisingly enough, by high State Department officials.

Mr. Dulles, who so often strikes European observers as an apocalyptic prophet of gloom, made the statement that there was "considerable similarity of thinking" between the West and Moscow regarding European security. Coming from Mr. Dulles, this statement seemed almost jauntily optimistic, and it is understandable that neither his French nor British colleague at the conference table could be so strenuously cheerful.

What may well lie behind Mr. Dulles' official optimism is a bit of politicking. With talk of the next Presidential election already heavy in the air at home, the Secretary of State seemed anxious not to give official support to what the voters were reading in their newspapers: that the Foreign Ministers' Conference was stalled on both German reunification and European security because both Russia and the West regarded each other's position as non-negotiable. By refusing officially to recognize this impasse, Mr. Dulles can, at the end of the Conference, report to the people of the United States that the Western leaders had done their utmost to solve our most pressing European problems and, although the West had "hammered Molotov hard," in Mr. Dulles' phrase, the "Geneva spirit" had been maintained, and the door left ajar for further discussions at or near the summit.

WE recognize, of course, that Mr. Dulles, as Secretary of State, is also one of the key figures in the present Administration and therefore must be, to a degree, involved with such political realities as face-saving and vote-getting. But we do hope that his current brand of optimism will be found as unsatisfactory for domestic consumption as it is clearly unsuitable for foreign export. Implicit in such optimism is a willed blindness to some of the awkward and unpleasant facts of our foreign problems, as well as the disastrous belief that time is on our side and will solve all our problems.

The U.S. cannot be sure that time will translate into effective action the diplomatic 'dogmas' of the State Department: that Germany must be reunited to insure European security, and that a Germany united by the Four Powers would certainly reject neutrality and turn to the West.

There is strong evidence that many West Germans do not share our official belief in the saving operation of time, and are determined to grab it by the forelock. There is a growing fear that Russia and the West will never agree on German unification, and that, as a consequence, the Germans must seek the means of reunification themselves or be resigned to an indefinite partition of their fatherland.

Even more shattering to our complacent official rationalization that the West Germans are content with the status quo is their growing suspicion that it is Russia, and not the Big Three, which is pounding the strongest fist on the conference table at Geneva. The very audacity of Molotov's recent proposal to erect a divided Germany as a permanent buffer between East and West was a show of strength calculated to make many West Germans feel that perhaps their present military commitment to the West could be a dangerous allegiance indeed.

Mr. Dulles' official optimism would seem to be somewhat contagious; it was, at any rate, disturbingly evident in a recent statement by John B. Hollister, director of the International Cooperation Administration. Mr. Hollister said that he was not worried by the Soviet's recently stepped-up program of economic and technical assistance to Asian countries; in fact, Mr. Hollister declared himself "hopeful" of a cut in our own foreign aid budget for next year—which is, of course, an election year.

In the face of the success which Russia's "peaceful penetration" has already met in India, Burma and Egypt, Mr. Hollister's statement is startling.

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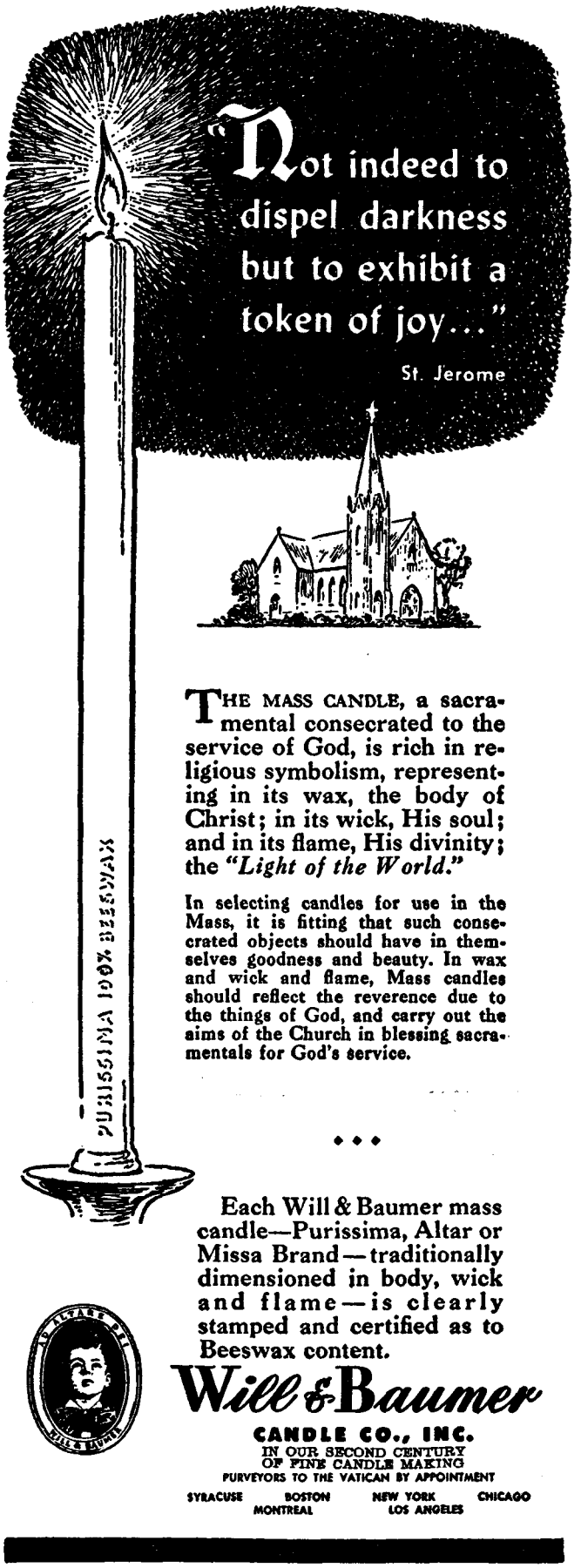

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In a situation which calls for more money and much more imagination than we have previously expended, he would seem to rely on less money, and, of course, more time.

Thus in Europe and Asia we seem committed to a policy of delay, indecision and drift, waiting for opportunities to turn up. But opportunities do not turn up; they are turned up, by realistic appraisal, imaginative planning and, where need be, by sacrifice—even in an election year.

FORD SHARES FOR SALE

THE long-awaited announcement that stock in the giant Ford Motor Company will be offered to the public marks a climax in the change-over that began with the passing of the original Henry Ford. That a world-wide industrial empire of such proportions has remained so closely held at this stage of American capitalism has served as a source of wonderment. The immediate cause of the change is the desire of the directors of the Ford Foundation to diversify its holdings, the sources of its considerable income. It is easy to surmise, however, that the aim of better public relations for Ford products had much to do with the decision.

The announcement points out that the portion of Foundation holdings which is to be sold will, in the process, be converted from non-voting to voting stock. The Ford family and "family interests" will retain but forty per cent of their hitherto exclusive control of voting rights, the majority of which will go over to the general investing public.

A greater change from the set-up under the original Henry Ford is difficult to imagine. The elder Mr. Ford, to the end, liked to keep control tightly within his own hands. No doubt his obstinacy had a lot to do with his company's sticking to the incomparable model-T too long. He was chary of bankers, unions and government. And by the same token he appeared to have little use for mere investors. The beneficiaries of large corporate profits, according to his express views, should be the purchaser (who would get a better product for his money) and the business itself (which could expand by means of plowed-back profits). If necessary, dividends should be given up to avoid lowering wages. Many Socialists might be startled to find that this was the sentiment expressed by the elder Henry Ford: "We have no place for non-working stockholders."

There will be plenty of such places under the new dispensation. The right to vote in annual stockholders' meetings may add a little gilt to this coming public offering. But it is the desire to share in Ford profits that will supply the heavy demand for these new securities—on the part of individuals, insurance companies and all sorts of funds and foundations. The Ford family and "family interests" would continue to exercise their control of the corporation with even less than the scheduled forty per cent of the voting stock, since the agglomeration of majority shareholders will perforce remain unorganized. For those who are not primarily speculators the lure of the stock market is simply that it provides a means of sharing the substantial profits of American enterprise.

"NO MONEY DOWN"

THERE was a time, and not so many years ago either, when buying on the installment plan was considered almost un-American. The solid citizen, unless he was purchasing something really large like a house, paid cash. Times have changed, though, and in the last few years buying on credit has soared to fantastic heights—so much so that the shoe is now on the other foot. Today the man who goes through life paying cash is the oddity, and if he ever really needs a loan or credit, he may find he has committed the cardinal sin of the world of finance, failure to establish his credit rating; he is, financially, a cipher.

Whatever the reasons for the change, installment buying is probably here to stay. Many families have come to regard paying for big purchases on time as a painless equivalent of a bank loan. But in the case of bank loans, interest rates are strictly policed, and the fact is that in most states there is no regulatory legislation to govern interest rates and service charges on installment buying. As a result, the cost is often phenomenally high.

Charges on long-term purchases which range from thirty to fifty per cent are by no means extraordinary. Often enough the charges the consumer pays are even higher. Many people seem to assume that there is a legal limit to the charges which can be made on time purchases; purchase contracts are often obscure, and thousands of buyers are victimized by unscrupulous dealers without ever realizing it. A man who manages to pay off a bank loan ahead of time receives an interest-rebate; in a high percentage of cases, early payment in installment buying brings no such rebate. This involves real money. If the total interest and service charges are paid off in six months, for example, instead of extended over the original three or four year period, the unwary purchaser

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may in effect be paying an interest rate of two or three hundred per cent.

Although not universal, sharp practices in the field of time payments are widespread enough to demand protective legislation comparable to that governing bank credit operations. New York recently held a conference as a preliminary to drafting such legislation, and other states might well follow suit. Usury is an ugly word, used to describe an ugly practice; it seems to be the correct term for some of the practices currently employed in the field of installment selling.

HARD TO ACCEPT

ONCE again, a critic has emphasized the gap which exists between principles which our country professes and actions which should follow from them. Mr. Don D. Humphrey, author of *American Imports,* a study financed jointly by the Twentieth Century Fund and the National Planning Association, pointed out that we have a liberal import policy and a program of reducing tariffs. We expect the benefits from such a program to be substantial, but we are unwilling to acknowledge the fact that some home industries will be hurt by the program. The result is that we compromise our trade agreements program.

As if to underline at least the negative part of Mr. Humphrey's statement, two labor groups have expressed fears that recent imports threaten particular industries, workers and working standards. Alex Rose, president of United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union, A.F.L., said that the dumping of foreign hats and caps into the domestic market could be "more devastating to such hat-making centers as Danbury and Norwalk than the floods."

Even more indicative of the difficulties involved in implementing our tariff policy is a recent order for three New York blouse manufacturers to pay the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, A.F.L., $60,000 for importing cheap blouses from Japan. This decision places the union itself in a strangely uncomfortable position. It has long fostered lower trade barriers as an aid to world peace and higher living standards generally. But 30,000 union members are blousemakers, and their jobs are now uncertain. David Dubinsky, a leader of the union, expressed grave concern that new tariff concessions to Japan will destroy more job opportunities in the States.

The fears of Mr. Rose and Mr. Dubinsky are real. And for some union members the fears have been transformed into the terrible reality; they are now without jobs or they have been forced to move to find them. But according to Mr. Humphrey these are the consequences of our beliefs and we must be prepared to accept them. We will not obtain the benefits of maximum trade without hurting domestic industries. Our task, he said, is to realize this and plan for it, even if we must extend Federal aid to the economic casualties. And surely he is right. We can recognize that there will be no simple solution, no pleasant panacea, and yet refuse to construct an economic fortress with trade barriers. Americans have proved their generosity by giving freely to the world. Now they face an even greater challenge.

NEXT WEEK

WILLIAM V. SHANNON writes in retrospect about the summit-meeting at Geneva.

"All of us would like to see the shadow of thermonuclear war lifted from mankind and the East-West struggle confined to the diplomatic arena, that old familiar jousting ground where we could be assured that no matter what the outcome of the conflict we might lose prestige and some share of our power but not civilization and life itself. The shadow, however, has not lifted. A dozen men in Moscow retain, now as before, the power to make war at any moment they choose. . . . What little we know of the careers of the members of this Soviet directorate does not encourage the belief that they are susceptible to the same humane aspirations and restraints which actuate the Western figures with whom they negotiate."

THE FARM FRONT

IN his article in this issue, James Hearst presents a strong case for the farmer. Figures released since his article was written give added weight to his arguments. According to the Commerce Department, all types of personal income went to new highs during the first nine months of this year —with the exception of farm income, which was approximately one billion dollars lower this September than it was a year ago. Further, although farmers did better in September than in August, farm income for the entire first nine months of this year is substantially lower than in the comparable period last year. If there are those who imagine the current wave of protest from farmers represents nothing but the approach of a national election, such figures should set them straight.

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Case for the Farmer

"THE AMERICAN FARMER IS AT THE MERCY OF FORCES WHICH ARE BEYOND HIS CONTROL"

JAMES HEARST

THE farmers are complaining again. Mass meetings like those of the twenties and thirties are being held in the Midwest to protest falling farm prices and rising farm costs. The farmers are resentful and afraid and the Department of Agriculture and Secretary Benson are coming in for scathing criticism. The boom is running smoothly for almost everyone else; employment is at high levels, wages and prices keep inching up, factories face full schedules, dividend payments are high. Why is the farmer headed the other way? Does he have a case?

The city housewife who reads in the paper that farmers own four and one-half million automobiles can scarcely keep her voice down when she prices steak at the supermarket. When her husband pays the grocery bill, he is likely to wonder why he has to be taxed to support farm prices when food costs are already out of sight. If the farmers are that well off, he thinks, they hardly need help from the government. Perhaps it is time for the farmer to offer his side of the story.

Three out of five people in the world's population go to bed hungry every night. It is our great good luck in the United States to live in a country which can feed us all and feed us well. We not only eat well, but we eat the most expensive food, the high-protein, high-sugar diets. This kind of diet is expensive in terms of land resources. Dr. John Black, an economist at Harvard, estimates that "An acre of Corn Belt land, planted to corn, will grow enough calories of food energy to support two or three people for a year. But it takes two acres of corn fed to hogs to support one person for a year, two-and-a-half if fed to dairy cows, six if fed to laying hens, and twenty if fed to beef cattle."

The people on the farm who produce this high-standard diet grow smaller in number as their efficiency increases. One hundred years ago the work of five farm people fed themselves and one person in the city. Today, four farm people feed themselves, twelve people in the city and two in another country. This shift illustrates graphically the effects of machine power, hybrid seeds, fertilizer techniques and improved management of human and soil resources. It also helps to explain the problem of surpluses.

The accumulation of more food and fiber than we can use is one aspect of the farm problem, but only one. According to a Federal Reserve Bank report of 1953, the people who derive most of their income from working the land constitute about 15.5% of the total population. But these farmers, even with the addition of money received from government price supports, are paid only 6% of the national income. In terms of income, although not of production or efficiency, agriculture is a declining industry. In September, 1955, *Business Conditions*—a review issued by the Chicago branch of the Federal Reserve Board—summed up the situation neatly: "The farm operator with his wagon deeply mired in surplus supplies," it said, "enviously watches the business boom roll by. After four years of continuous decline farm operators' net income is now running 27 per cent below its 1951 peak."

BUT why is agriculture a declining industry in terms of income? Why does the farmer enviously watch the boom roll by and not join the procession? Farm and government economists can give better reasons for low farm prices than solutions for improving them. There are three main reasons why the farmer, at present, is marching against the parade of boom prices.

For one thing, the American farmer is at the mercy of forces, both man-made and natural, which are beyond his control. Like all producers of raw material, he is the victim of a kind of reverse business practice where he seems to sell at wholesale and buy at retail prices. When the food or fiber which he raises is first sold, it goes through a long series of processing and packaging operations before it reaches the final consumer. Consequently the farmer receives less than half of the dollar (about 47¢) which the customer in a grocery store spends for his bread and butter.

Mr. Hearst, himself a farmer in Iowa, has contributed to a number of American journals on farm problems.

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But when he buys a tractor or commercial fertilizer, he buys from a local dealer at the full retail price. And the spread in price between what the farmer receives and the consumer pays is widening as people ask for more processing—instant oatmeal, for example, and special packaging which provides meat already cut, trimmed, and frozen for immediate use.

The farmer's chief virtue, which also seems to be his principal bugbear, is his dedication to full production. It is his business to grow things and the occupational risks of weather, insects, blight, markets and prices cannot be accurately predicted at the beginning of the season. Once the farmer has set the cycle of growth in motion, there is little he can do to change it until it has completed its course. This is why the flow of milk, meat and grain from the farms maintains a full current year after year.

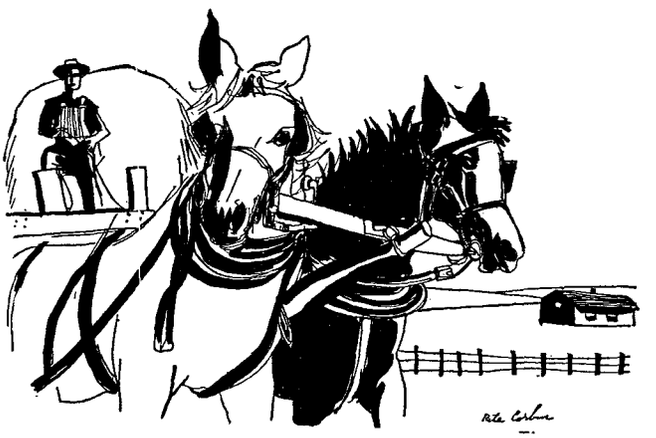
The vagaries of weather make it difficult for him to adjust production to demand. It is not possible for the farmer to arrange sunshine, rain and frost in such a way that the nation has enough food to safeguard it against shortages, and yet not enough to depress prices. Furthermore, where food prices are concerned, a small increase in supply will make a large decrease in retail prices. A six per cent increase in butter fat over the normal demand might cause a twenty per cent drop in price. The violence of such fluctuations leaves the farmer somewhat bewildered and almost helpless.

This inability to control his production leaves the farmer bouncing on an erratic and unstable price level. In national emergencies he is well rewarded as prices shoot up and buyers flock to market. But in peace time, when the farmer loses his big customers, he becomes a poor relation, hat in hand, asking for help.

TARIFF laws are based on the principle that if the general welfare requires it, certain interests are entitled to government help and protection. With this principle in mind, the farmer felt justified in asking for a farm loan. He knew that aid was often extended to shipping and manufacturing interests when the general welfare was in question. If a subsidy is not "creeping socialism" when used to further some business interest, he decided, farming should be able to be protected in the same way.

The farmer bases his argument for government assistance on his record of production—a record which does not rise and fall sharply from year to year. This assurance of enough food and fiber to supply the nation through good times and bad is a national asset of incalculable worth. In 1932, for example, the worst year of the depression, farm income declined from an index of 142 in 1929 to 59. But where industry closed down and waited for the storm to pass and industrial production declined from an index figure of 110 to 58, agricultural production dropped barely three per cent. A steady and dependable supply of food and clothing is one of the benefits the consumer receives for the taxes he pays in support of farm prices. He is entitled to know what his money is spent for and how much the farm program costs him. But the farmer would like to know how much it is worth to the customer to know that he will not go to bed hungry.

THE people of the cities need food; the farmer needs above all else a stable price level, and most of the farm programs have been pointed toward that goal. The word "parity" which crops up in every discussion of the farm situation simply means an equable exchange of goods—the ability, for example, of the farmer to sell corn at a price that will let him buy a plow on a comparable basis.



The price of farm products is not, of course, set by the farmer. He must accept what the market will pay him, and consequently he is at the mercy of forces that govern the market. Since small changes in production cause large shifts in price, he needs to have the peaks and valleys of prices somewhat leveled out. The citizen who helps support farm programs with his taxes is giving his assistance in this task.

Figures concerning the cost of the farm program have often been distorted. A late release by the United States Department of Agriculture shows that one hour of factory labor in 1929 would buy 6.4 loaves of bread; in 1954 it would buy 10.6 loaves. In 1929 one hour of factory labor would buy 1.2 pounds of steak; in 1954 it would buy 2 pounds. Seven and eight-tenths pints of milk equalled one hour of factory labor in 1929; in 1954 the amount was 16.2 pints. In other words, the city dweller is spending considerably less of his working time earning his food now than he did twenty-five years ago.

The benefits of the farm program are obvious

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enough. The actual dollar expenditures show what the program has cost the taxpayer. According to an official Department of Agriculture report, the net loss for the whole farm program, including price support expenditures, for the past twenty years is a little over one billion dollars. As a comparison, this is about the same amount of money that is appropriated for Aids and Special Services to business in *one* year.

The problem of surpluses is one that plagues administrators of farm programs. There are at least two basic views on the question of surpluses. One view (this is probably the one city-dwellers hear most often) is that surpluses hang like a threat over the market and depress prices. The other maintains that the surpluses are good business, that we need reserves of food as much as we need reserves of men and arms for defense. Thus men such as R. M. Evans, former AAA chief and member of the Federal Reserve Board, feel that the one billion bushels of corn now in storage is not a bad thing; they point out that if the country had to depend on it alone for feed—because of flood, drought or war—it would at the present rate of consumption last about three months.

Resentment among farmers in the Middle West centers largely on Secretary Benson. Rightly or wrongly, they consider him indifferent and unsympathetic. When Senator Humphrey charged Mr. Benson with acting like the "president of a private bank instead of a public servant," he expressed the feeling of many Corn Belt farmers. In spite of the public debate on this point it is not a question of flexible vs. fixed support prices; farm prosperity will not be determined by such limited techniques. It is the attitude they think they detect in the Department of Agriculture which disturbs many farmers. They resent the unpublicized interest hike from 3 to 5 per cent on FHA "disaster loans." And farmers, with their long tradition of conservatism, were not pleased when James A. McConnell, new head of the Commodity Stabilization service, referred to "this program which, if continued, will certainly lead us into the final step of Socialism." This is nonsense, and the farmers know it. The question is: Do the people in the city know it too?

RURAL AMERICA

Poverty on the Land

JOHN STANLEY

A SHOWER of snow mutes the ragged outlines of a farm that embarrasses the hopeful, willing country in New York and Kentucky and Maine and the rest of the states. The snow is both a promise of suffering and its alleviation; at least there will be water now after the long summer that has dried up the shallow spring up the hill; but with the snow will come the cold wind that cuts its way through the thin boards. The family will huddle around the kitchen range, and the children will whine and the parents will scold—it will be a situation that is beyond homework, and no one will want to go to the wintry cold bedrooms. Everyone will be longing for rest; there will be the dry fatigue that always comes from a constant diet of thin food, unsatisfying clothes and a steadily deteriorating situation.

Every decade millions leave this sort of thing and move into town. They are as worn out as the land they leave behind them. They realize that they are not receiving their share of what this country has to offer. They feel like an out-group; they're not as smooth and shiny as everyone else, and everything else, is getting to be. It takes cash to get into the national rhythm and shape, and the place to do this is in town. So, at a certain point in the complex pattern of endurance and desire, and urged by the sharp pricking of abrupt personal dissatisfaction, the farmer decides to go and share the things the city can provide, even though this may, will, mean the loss of an increasingly dubious "independence," fresh air and the shredded remnants of an inherited tradition.

The rural picture that comes into focus in this country today is composed to a great extent of blacks and whites: good land, like those now famous counties in Iowa, or the Chemung Valley in New York State; or bad land, marginal land that has been used up, that has lost its fertility. There are "good methods" and "bad methods," which either preserve and improve the land, or accelerate decline so that the most that can be expected is a good crop of goldenrod. Whatever long-range effect the proliferation of machinery will have on human beings, animals, land,

Mr. Stanley, a New York writer, is a frequent contributor to The Commonweal.

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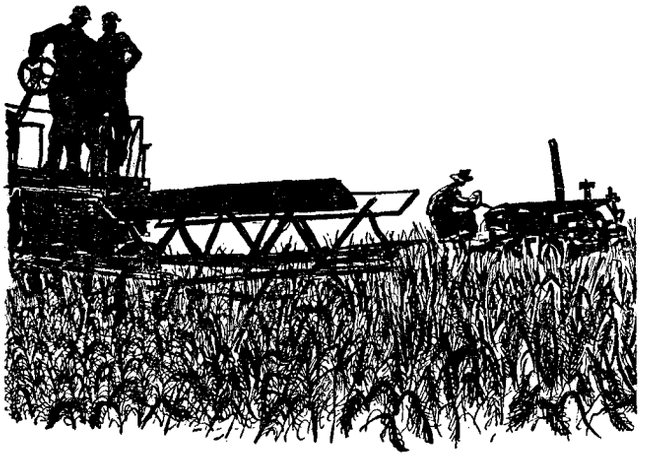
and the civilization, the central fact is that only these machines enable the farmer to compete at all with the factory-trade-finance people for an equitable share of the national income. The farmers who do not have them have no chance—and by farmer is meant landsmen working on their own, not gentlemen types riding a hobby or an income-tax gimmick, nor subsidized institutions nor cult-followers. Some real prosperity



has been achieved by farmers with good land, good stock, good seed, good equipment and so forth. Their houses are white and covered with aluminum storm-windows; they are warm and soft with oil-burners and inner-spring mattresses and vacuum cleaners just like those of men who have nice trucking businesses.

Those who have, get more: this is especially true of farmers today. Those who have good tools, good land and all the rest of it get more from the Federal agencies which give subsidies than those who own a few acres of hill-side land and grow a little corn to support a couple of hogs and a few scrawny chickens. One is not even considered a dairy farmer if he owns only three or four cows. And there seems to be a growing campaign to eliminate subsistence farmers altogether.

Many months ago President Eisenhower wondered out loud whether it would not be wise to move three million of these low-income rural dwellers into towns and industry. And now, late in 1955, Congressmen are wondering out loud if it is "economic" to have these inefficient people on their deteriorating land, and whether their modest subsidies might not be eliminated altogether. The same question is being brought up increasingly in the financial pages of papers like the New York *Times*.

Decade by decade the number and percentage of rural dwellers goes down, and decade by decade the average size of a farm gets bigger. Volume after volume of that invaluable source of contemporary information, *The United States Statistical Abstract,* may be cited as evidence for this. Other items, such as the appalling incidence of maiming by farm machinery or the decline of infant mortality and the lengthening of life expectancy in a variety of categories, lend further support. We are undergoing, it seems, a form of largely unperceived collectivization and a steadily increasing proletarianization.

Some "professional" agrarians are now speaking in terms of concentrating their efforts on bettering the lives of this category of human beings—including the many hundreds of thousands of Mexicans who enter the country legally and otherwise—instead of attempting to buck a "wave of the future" by advocating a policy which would tie many to the land. They are finding that it sounds "romantic" to keep on talking about the land "as a way of life" with its concomitant evocation of lush pastures dappled with white-faced cows, and kitchen gardens sparkling with dew on June mornings, and "Mother" putting-up preserves for the winter. Mother will more likely be found humming down the highway in a ranch-wagon to the new cross-county shopping-center with its acres of black parking space to buy corn flakes and things to put in the deep-freeze.

Her poorer sister is doing a lot of marketing in the local general store: the cheapest of white bread and margarine, canned goods and powdered milk form a large part of her family's diet. Country children are not all rosy-cheeked; many are sallow with stringy hair and bad teeth. There seems to be little time, energy or desire for homecrafts—especially when you can get small chicken pies in aluminum foil plates from the grocer's at five for a dollar.

PICTURE this: a frame house of skimpy proportions, two stories high with a shaky, narrow porch along one side, built of second-hand lumber and covered with tar-shingles pressed to look like yellow brick. It's on a dirt road pocked with ruts and stones—dust in August, a slough in March and a mad toboggan-slide in December; two cars cannot pass. It's more than a mile to the nearest paved road, and three miles more to the nearest general store and post office and further still to the nearest town and church and school. The view is magnificent: a thousand feet below and miles away is a winding river lined with rich black farms where the land is as carefully utilized as it is in France. In the distance there are lavender hills, and in the winter moonlight, blue snow and black trees. Inside the kitchen door hangs the only light bulb in the whole house. Last year there was electricity for the first time in the area but there was only enough credit to wire the one room. You go to the "bath room" and up to bed by candlelight, which makes for an atmosphere not of romance but of melancholy, and the mother of small children is ever on the alert for disaster. There is neither radio

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nor telephone. In the summer-time the cooking is done on a kerosene stove that smokes and stinks if it is not carefully tended and expertly used; in the winter there is the kitchen range. If cash and credit are relatively adequate there is the luxury of coal, usually bought by the hundred-weight, which is more expensive than by the ton. And when things get really difficult the derelict barn gives a few more boards, and these are sawed up by hand.

The poor, both rural and urban, are forced to live constantly in extravagant debt: they must buy cheap shoes that wear out quickly, cheap foods that do not keep the body in top form, cheap tools that break and are inefficient, second-hand, broken down, wasteful cars that bad roads soon tear up completely. The result is exhaustion that permits no rest, no growth, and little joy at the bright vistas in the fertile valleys below. There is only weary dragging on from day to day, almost a guilt-sense of failure at such poverty in the midst of the nation's storied progress recorded in much expensive color in the shiny magazines each week.

Here there is no field-stone pump-house with cedar shingles snugly housing a plump tank of cold and sweet artesian water; there is only the shallow spring that drools the water through for half the year; when the trickle stops, water must be fetched in buckets down the road, starting in the summer-time when all the fields in the valley below are being worked by men who cannot spend their time carting water in a bucket; they're out producing. Here the fields are full of wild flowers, with only patches cultivated for the sake of quaint, small fruit that makes one say, "Well, it's not worth it, cheaper to buy it in town."

At one time this land was cleared of trees and made to yield some fruit, support some families. Up the road there is still the heaped-up wreckage of a one-room school-house that served a score of families until sometime between 1918 and 1939. Now the trees are growing back, along with untidy brambles and black-eyed susans, thistles and grape vines that run wild. Little foxes scoot across the road, and the dog barks on the leash. The children stand in the mud near the post-box in their thin clothes waiting for the school-bus moving carefully in the November weather. They do not come home again until it is almost dark.

There is no hot water in the house except for what can be heated on the stove in a bucket so, except in warm weather, there are mostly sponge baths in the kitchen. There is an outhouse, frigid in winter and alive with flies and stench and foraging rats in summer, a sweat-box under the slow-moving sun. In winter the house is a cave of draughts because everything is fitted poorly.

Discouragement and fatigue and loss of vision line the face of rural poverty. It is difficult to see beyond the muddy door-yard in the grey morning, and the mood lasts all day. No one comes and no one goes. A longing sets in for a little escape from the water-stained walls and unmended furniture, the cracked saucer and the wrinkled cotton housedress. The supreme objective becomes the capture of a moment of spice, covered with spangles and filled with bubbles; a juke-box, a movie, a glass of lemon and lime or a comic book for the children, a permanent wave—which are wasteful as the thrifty and virtuous know. And there is always alcohol.

It is quite something to pass through a West Virginia town that looks like a movie set for a Wild West film *circa* 1903. There are only timber houses and covered wooden sidewalks, and a big raw sign that yells *whiskey*. There seem to be a lot of fierce-looking dark-eyed young men squatting on their haunches in the open in the middle of a week-day morning. Their eyes seem to follow strangers, and they roll cigarettes and seem silent. The report is that they don't do much of anything, many of them; they hunt and fish and from time to time cut down a tree and sell it; they make their own liquor and sell some of it. They are the men one wrote letters for in the army. They have a culture so different from the bulk of their middle-class compatriots that "foreigner" is not a completely illegitimate term to use on them.

Rural poverty is lived in isolation, in the imprisonment of broken fences and unpruned fruit-trees that bear small, hard, wormy fruit. Rural poverty is as various as the terrain of the country. It is the lot, in God's mysterious justice, of millions of human beings, including the "single-men-in-barracks" types, the dark-skinned pickers in the "factories-in-the-fields," and the blue-eyed "crackers," some of whom have

their huts dug into the sides of the red hills planted with stunted corn, and whose principal passion is a transference of all their resentment and frustration to a hatred of the Negro—a fellow prisoner. The rural poor are weighted down with chains of poor health and lassitude and ignorance. Their final humiliation is their removal—in one light it looks like a deliverance—from their wasted properties, rented or mortgaged, to the great institution of the industrial slum or housing project. Thomas Jefferson died a long time ago.

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Spiritual Pilgrimage

DOUGLAS HYDE

THE British press recently reported that "the Rev. Hugh Ross Williamson, a priest of the Church of England, has been received into the Roman Catholic Church at Farm Street by the Rev. Basil Fitzgibbon, S.J." Behind the report lies something more than the familiar story of one man's spiritual pilgrimage. For the journey from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism is one that significant numbers of others are making at this moment. The movement follows the recent adoption by the Convocation of Canterbury of what are known as the South India Resolutions, which are regarded by a strong minority of Anglicans as an alarming manifestation, with far-reaching consequences, of Pan-Protestantism.

Hugh Ross Williamson is the fifth prominent Anglican clergyman to come to the Church in recent weeks. Just over a month before he was received, the Rev. William Walton Hannah became a Roman Catholic. Both men were so prominent in Anglican circles that their conversions deserve study.

The gifted, versatile Ross Williamson was perhaps best known to the British public as a popular radio and television broadcaster, playwright, historian and novelist, whose services have increasingly been used in recent years by the B.B.C. But to the authorities of his own church he was the most influential member of the Church of England's "Papalist" wing. For some years the Anglican press had been closed to him and so the *Catholic Herald,* in particular, opened its columns to him, and his letters, book reviews and articles regularly appeared there as a consequence. Yet, while following Rome in every way open to an Anglican clergyman, he still clung to belief in the validity of his Anglican orders. So long as he thought of himself as a priest, he believed that his place was inside the Church of England. He renounced Anglicanism only when that belief had been destroyed.

Walton Hannah's name first became known to the general public when a few years ago he wrote a book—now in its seventh edition—called *Darkness Visible.* In it he claimed that the strength of Freemasonry within his church was already considerable and growing stronger, and he named many bishops and clergy as active Freemasons. High on the list he cited was the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Fisher. Mr. Hannah is not one of those people who attribute all the weaknesses of fallen men and the troubles of this world to nothing more than a Masonic plot. But he did become convinced, on the basis of a close study of the "mysteries" of Masonry, that its influence in the Anglican Church was one of the factors contributing to the trend towards Pan-Protestantism, of which the South India Resolutions are the most striking and recent example.

"Only Rome can afford to smile at the situation and win converts," he wrote. Rome has, indeed, benefited in a way which he could not foresee at the time. Mr. Hannah is now studying for the priesthood at the Beda College for late vocations in Rome, having gone there within a month of his reception into the Church.

EVEN more important, however, than the individual prominence of Walton Hannah and Ross Williamson is the fact that they were both leaders of the influential Annunciation Group within the Church of England. This Group numbers two thousand clergymen bound together by their hostility toward Pan-Protestantism and united in their belief that if the Anglican Church is part of the universal Catholic Church, as they hold it to be, it is a grave error to associate it with those churches which make no such claim.

In particular, the members of the group were troubled by the official attitude of the Archbishop of Canterbury and others to the Church of South India. This body is an amalgamation of Anglicans, Methodists and others—practically all the non-Catholic Christian bodies in fact—who, in this area where the Catholic Church is both old and strong, wanted to pool their strength. In the Church of South India non-episcopally ordained ministers of Nonconformist bodies are, by its constitution, put on the same footing as Anglicans, who regard themselves as validly ordained priests. Such a body, of course, made nonsense of the claim of the Anglicans within it to apostolic succession.

Then, last July, under the guidance of Dr. Fisher the Convocation of Canterbury suddenly passed resolutions recognizing the orders of the Church of South India and agreeing to enter into limited intercommunion with it. Walton Hannah and two or three others, among them the chaplain of a school in Canterbury itself, left the Church of England at once and

Mr. Hyde, himself a convert, is on the staff of the English *Catholic Herald.*

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sought reconciliation with Rome; twenty or thirty other Anglican clergymen are now said to be under instruction or contemplating it.

Ross Williamson simply could not believe that the resolutions would not be revoked when the Convocation of Canterbury met again in October, after Anglicans everywhere had had an opportunity to think over the far-reaching implications of what their leaders had done. When the resolutions were not revoked, Williamson immediately left the Anglican Church. In a statement issued on the day on which he was received into the Roman Catholic Church, he said:

"In the Convocation of July, 1955, the Archbishops and bishops of the Church of England officially, and with no dissentient, proclaimed that the orders of the recently formed and admittedly schismatic and heretical 'Church of South India' were as valid as those of the Church of England. They thereby defined what they mean by 'Holy Orders.' Many who realized at the time that this decision marked the end of the Church of England as we have known it hoped nonetheless that it . . . would be rescinded. . . For myself, I now see clearly that the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church into which I, in common with all Christians everywhere, was baptized and in which, in the Creeds, I have regularly affirmed my belief, is in truth the Church of Rome and I have as a consequence, made my immediate submission."

TO many Britons, of course, the whole South India issue seems trivial and unreal. But it is a reality for those who have believed that Anglicanism is a genuine branch of the Catholic Church. These include the Anglo-Catholics, who treasure what they believe to be the Catholicity of their church, and the Papalists who go still further, accepting the supremacy of the Holy Father himself whilst still believing in the validity of Anglican orders. How many will finally come to the Church remains to be seen.

Walton Hannah, who is in touch with many of those who are under instruction, himself wrote recently in the London *Catholic Herald:* "Certainly there should be no false optimism that this Anglican dilemma will immediately produce a 'Third Spring'. . . . This trickle may well widen out into a small stream, but there is no evidence that it will become a flood."

That is a necessary warning intended to counteract those who have talked and written of the immediate possibility of thousands flocking to the Church from Anglicanism. Nonetheless, it is true to say that there is at least the hope that the present movement may develop into one of the most significant since Newman's day, even though it falls far short of that Second Spring of which he spoke with such eloquence one hundred years ago.

THE SCREEN

ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS WITHOUT

PERHAPS the master showman, Samuel Goldwyn, announced "Guys and Dolls" with too much offscreen fanfare. The stage show was excellent, with music and lyrics by Frank Loesser and a script adapted by Jo Swerling and Abe Burrows from a Damon Runyon story. But the big money ($1,000,000) paid for the play, and the fancy cast and staff gathered for the movie production were widely publicized. So great were the expectations that the movie could hardly come up to them. "Guys and Dolls," like "Oklahoma!", the other movie recently filmed from an outstanding stage musical, takes itself too seriously and therefore lacks the lyrical bounce a lighthearted comedy should have.

Although "Guys and Dolls" is disappointing, it by no means lays an egg. It has a handsome Goldwyn production, beautifully but somewhat statically photographed in Eastman Color and CinemaScope; it has the pleasant Loesser score with the addition of three new songs and, alas, the subtraction of several old ones, notably "Bushel and a Peck," which might have livened up proceedings; and it has a cast that will certainly win attention. Outstanding among the few to come from the original stage cast is Vivian Blaine as the long-engaged-but-never-married Adelaide, and Miss Blaine puts over two of the film's best songs: the psychosomatic "Lament" and "Take Back Your Mink," the latter done with the aid of the very well-built Goldwyn Girls. Frank Sinatra is a natural as the Runyonesque Nathan Detroit, who is so busy running New York's "oldest established permanent floating crap game" that he hasn't time to marry Miss Adelaide. "Sue Me," sung by Vivian and Frank, is one of the picture's high points. But naturally, Marlon Brando and Jean Simmons in their first musical movie will win most attention because of the offbeat casting. Both have pleasing, though by no means spectacular, singing voices, and both can dance well enough to fit the requirements that choreographer Michael Kidd thought up for them. Miss Simmons is delightful in the role of Sgt. Sarah Brown from the Save-a-Soul Mission, and Mr. Brando, tamed down and fully dressed, is quite engaging as the handsome gambler for whom Sarah sets her bonnet. It is hardly their fault if several of their scenes drag during the picture's two-and-a-half hour running time. Director Joseph L. Mankiewicz, who wrote the script from the original play, knows how to make a movie exciting, but he must have been over-awed by Goldwyn's big investment in "Guys and Dolls." Mankiewicz hasn't made a bad movie; Runyon fans may even be spell-

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bound; but ordinary moviegoers, less enraptured with the Runyon style, may wonder what all the fuss is about and will look in vain for the buoyancy they have a right to expect from a musical.

THOSE moviegoers who find the artificial Broadway atmosphere and the Runyonesque dialogue of "Guys and Dolls" more than somewhat sophisticated for their taste may take to Liberace in his first movie, "Sincerely Yours." They may be surprised, however, to find Liberace smiling a little less under Gordon Douglas' direction and even trying to act—a little.

The movie uses every device conceivable to keep Liberace at a piano—in a concert, at a nightclub and even at a museum, where he plays on pianos hallowed by Paderewsky and Liszt and even plays on Mozart's harpsichord. The movie finally gets around to a plot which strangely resembles "The Man Who Played God." This allows our pianist-hero to lose his hearing, learn lip reading, and start re-arranging the lives of people whom he watches through binoculars from his penthouse near Central Park. Backing up or surrounding the great man are Joanne Dru as his secretary, who loves him; Dorothy Malone, whom he loves; Alex Nicol, who loves Dorothy; William Demarest as his manager, and many, many others, most of whom act as an audience for the piano playing. Liberace plays something for everybody's taste, from Tchaikovsky and Gershwin to "The Notre Dame Victory March" and "Chopsticks." "Sincerely Yours" will no doubt more firmly entrench the two camps about Liberace; it will also make millions of dollars.

FOR those who may want to see a movie in which the music is only incidental, there's "The View from Pompey's Head." Producer-director Philip Dunne starts out quite well with the script he wrote from Hamilton Basso's novel. The first half of the film is exciting; Richard Egan, a young lawyer returning from New York to his Southern birthplace, rediscovers and re-examines the South after an absence of ten years. The view is not pretty; bit by bit the film builds up the evidence against the people of the town and their strange form of "Shintoist" tradition. But unfortunately, at the half-way point in the movie, when you're beginning to agree that ancestor worship might well be the cause of cultural decay, the plot takes an unpredictable, almost unmotivated turn and suddenly falls apart. Egan discovers he still loves the girl he left behind (Dana Wynter) and is ready to leave his wife and children in New York to win this Southern belle from her husband (Cameron Mitchell). The story suddenly becomes as silly as some of the mores it is satirizing. The sub-plot, well handled by Sidney Blackmer as a famous novelist, and Marjorie Rambeau as his wife, is quite effective. "The View from Pompey's Head" had an interesting point to start with; it's a shame it didn't stick with it.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

THE STAGE

THE BELLE OF ST. TRINIAN'S

DO YOU not sometimes idly wonder, in the still of the night, whatever happens to girls who go to Cheltenham? Mr. Ronald Searle, of course, has already told us of the midnight terrors of the academic term. ("Go ahead! Say it!" Moira cried triumphantly, twisting Sybil's arm noisily out of its socket. "Say 'I hereby resolve to leave my body to science.' ") Yet when the sun falls full on the long grass, when the summer "vac" begins and the tweeds have been sent home to Mummy at Lacklustre Hall in Herts, when the Vicar has had it and the games-mistress sadly puts away her hockey stick until those crisp afternoon scrimmages of next October ("Well done! St. Trinian's!")—what happens? Miss Joyce Grenfell knows the whole horrid truth. Has she not been herself the woman who suffered, who was there? Follows a time of scalding humiliations and sudden *farouche* intensities: men loom hideously on the horizon ("shall we go punting on the Cam?") and at St. Trinian's, one's mottoes were *Fair Play* and *Guard Thine Honor*. Some old Cheltenham grads never do quite survive that shock: they go out to the colonies, and Miss Beatrice Lillie has told us of their melancholy histories—those dark nights of the soul when, over that last gin-and-schweppes, Maud and Mabel (under the table) look out at China 'cross the bay and realize they're rotten to the core.

Others endure, and Miss Grenfell sings their sad songs. One or two read *The New Statesman* and take up yogurt or theosophy ("Swami Ramakrishna will speak on The Transcendental Thou. Meditation & Discourse. All welcome. Adm. free. Collection.") A third (Hester was always musical) forms a Welsh choral group to chant (in a voice of *utter* purity) all about that shepherd on a high, high hill and his lass in the dale below. In Bloomsbury, another goes dotty over *objets d'art* and opens a shop specializing in Scottish antlers (fun!) on which to hang one's entire *batterie de cuisine*. The lucky ones marry, only to bring forth cheeky impertinent daughters who wish to make unsuitable marriages. ("Mummy wants only what's best, Harriet, but do you *really* think you could be happy as the wife of a middle-aged Portuguese

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conjurer?") Everywhere, too, egalitarianism encroaches ominously on the barriers of class. ("You should have seen Lady Fortescue, Sir Hannibal's wife, when the chemist first called her 'ducks.' She could hardly make it back to the Rolls Royce, but now, truth to tell, the old dear rather likes it.")

The belle of St. Trinian's tolls delicately through the evening at the Bijou: those grace notes of class, those satiric sharps and flats of which Miss Grenfell is such a mistress, are superbly orchestrated in a memorial symphony to the British upper class with its back to the wall (and never so admirable as then), muddling through with hope in its heart, and a cup of tea and the cucumber sandwiches as peace offerings to a heedless future. Miss Grenfell's party has charm, wit and point: the lady herself has the kind of private poise which is not to be had by taking thought, and one could not wish for an evening of more adroit and amusing personal entertainment. Unhappily, the occasion is some quarter of an hour too long, and could be purified by the elision of several unwelcome specimens of ballet *kitsch*. I might add that Miss Grenfell's gowns—by Victor Stiebel of London—are, in their opulent elegance and exquisite femininity, the most beautiful clothes to be seen on any stage in New York. (*At the Bijou.*)

RICHARD HAYES.

COMMUNICATIONS

IMMIGRATION AND JAPAN

Long Island City, N. Y.

TO the Editors: While a subcommittee under Sen. Harley M. Kilgore is preparing to examine the immigration laws in Washington (hearings open Nov. 21), this correspondent would like to call your readers' attention to the serious problems facing Japan and to the need of the Japanese to emigrate.

Japan, in the view of many observers, faces the most serious basic economic problems of any nation in the world. Japan has 88,000,000 people who are crowded into four tiny islands equal in area only to our single state of Montana. While some other nations have severe economic problems, they usually have the basic materials—such as enough land, resources, potential power—and their problem is to develop what they have. The Japanese appear to have tried almost everything to solve their economic problems internally (Japanese farmers, for example, get the highest yield per acre of rice in the world), and at the end the basic problem remains.

Almost all authorities agree that a part of the answer for Japan is in emigration. Experts believe that opportunities to emigrate would raise hope in Japan. Meanwhile, under our immigration laws the largest quotas go to Great Britain and Eire and Germany. Two-thirds of all the annual quota admissions, in fact, go to these three. This would be fine if these countries needed and used the greater part of the quotas granted to them . . . . But Great Britain has used only about *one-seventh* of her quota admissions from 1931 until the present, and Eire has used about the same. (This fraction includes the depression years, when immigration from all countries was low; the proportion would be higher for the years after World War II alone, though still far below the total annual quotas granted). And recently the newspapers have devoted attention to a report of a government population commission in Ireland which in its report issued in Dublin last summer stated that Ireland now has a "population problem" caused by a shortage of people—the reverse of Japan's—and that every effort is being made within Ireland to keep the populace at home.

It would seem evident then that immigration quotas should be determined in part by need. Because of her serious problems Japan is currently slaying her babies as a deliberate policy designed to provide an "answer" for her basic economic situation. More than 1,500,000 will have been slain this year, Japanese officials estimate, by legalized abortion if all things remain the

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same. And lest the fact of the abortions prejudice the reader against Japan itself, it should be remarked that abortions were illegal in Japan before World War II, and were instituted in the postwar era after a campaign by Westerners for the Japanese to "curb population."

GEORGE P. CARLIN.

"CONFIDENTIAL INFORMANTS"

Bloomington, Ill.

TO the Editors: I enjoyed your editorial of October 21 about confidential informers. In it you state that J. Edgar Hoover has become a symbol-figure and express your inability to understand how this has come about. There is, of course, no simple explanation of this phenomenon, to my knowledge, but there is in the present cultural period the germinal elements causing this formation.

France, at the time of the Dreyfus affair, was in a similar stage of emotional development. Maurice Barrès, in *"le culte du moi,"* and *"le culte des morts,"* exemplifies the condition perfectly. Barrès was anti-Dreyfus for the same reason David Lawrence is anti-Fund for the Republic, etc. . . . . Barrès and the French Nationalists, somewhat analogous today to the Chicago *Tribune* and other right wing spokesmen, with the support of Catholics, (Here is a curious situation; the Catholic opinion is divided between the reactionarism of *Our Sunday Visitor,* the conservatism of most Catholic presses, and the liberalism of The Commonweal) had common grounds for their stand. The religious and nationalists were concerned about tradition, and about the good of the state. The situation today is similar; many commentators and government officials would have willingly sacrificed the honor and integrity of Eugene Landy to the pillory of national security, had the liberals not pressed the matter into public view.

"Le culte du moi," and *"le culte des morts,"* are the mechanical devices by which the individual can identify himself with the state, or any other collective image. Americans practically worship Washington because Washington symbolizes America; anyone who criticizes the perfect conception of Washington is considered unpatriotic because of this identification. Similarly, J. Edgar Hoover symbolizes order, family, harmony, etc. . . . Because of an excellent and long record, he has become another object of worship; the natural inference is that anyone who criticizes Hoover is against law and order, family, etc. . . .

Every day, Americans are bombarded with success stories, with famous personalities. Is it a wonder that Dr. Norman Vincent Peale sold so many copies of his book? Religion has become American: a contestant thanks the Lord for winning money on a quiz program, or Jersey Joe Walcott prays to win over Marciano.

Because America is now so materially sufficient, a necessary identification of material success and religion is made to convey the impression that this success is not only the result of hard physical effort, but that the successful man has earned his rewards with God's help. Though this doctrine is repugnant to the intellectual school of theology, it provides a handy mental mechanism for giving greed and ambition the worthy aspect of religion. Thus man satisfies his physical and emotional desires and is comparatively happy.

The trend to symbolize our aspirations in popular figures serves as a mold to make a more uniform society in which the same values are recognized by everyone. This is a trend to a conformity achieved *in toto* only by the Nazi and Communist regimes. J. Edgar Hoover has become the symbol of everything that is good and valuable, just as Washington and Lincoln were before him. And to keep this symbol pure, every action and word of this symbol must be considered truth and law; that is what Hitler, Lenin, and Stalin achieved in their respective spheres of influence; and that is why the more the masses are fused together by common appeals, the greater the danger is of man-worship, and, as happened in Argentina, of idolization.

GEORGE STARR.

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GERMINIE. By Edmond & Jules de Goncourt. Translated by Jonathan Griffith. Introduction by Martin Turnell. Grove. $3.

By WILLIAM DUNLEA

GERMINIE LACERTEUX, the strongest of the Goncourts' novels, but not easily available in English, first appeared in France in 1865. This was the most fecund period for one of the most felicitous of literary partnerships. For all that it stands today as a period masterpiece, its stabbing power and shock value attenuated, the core holds intact. It is no artificially reanimated corpse of a "human document," as we might be tempted to imagine. If it is dated, we sense this is not for its faults but more determiningly for its limitations, which are those of a treatment we have rejected. That it can still reach us is the more extraordinary in that it never transcends these limitations, palpably or insensibly.

From their long interest in painting the Goncourts drew their flair for the sensuous so instinct in their writing style. Twenty years of collaboration beginning in 1850 produced, besides their brilliant historical volumes, some of the century's most important art criticism, and the monumental Journal, irreplaceable in the study of the literary life of their time; in fiction they published five novels and several plays.

Their novels had direct bearing on the Naturalistic school whose highpriest was, of course, Zola; Martin Turnell, however, insists on their affiliation to Flaubertian fact-transforming Realism. The brothers were both emotional depressives, and so to some degree are all their heroines, who are the protagonists of all their novels. It is largely the triumph of a trenchant narrative, free of any breath of sordidness, that the principal of the present work is one of the most clinical portrayals of a fallen woman to appear in a novel.

Due to its basis in the life of an actual person and to the "scientific" premise lurking behind every scene in *Germinie,* the cards are stacked with a somewhat malevolent logic against the heroine, each step of whose moral "downfall" is plotted in view of a fatal precipitation. Germinie is presented as a woman born and curiously martyrized by the blind force of insatiable self-devouring passion, and still she is not denied a certain nostalgic free will. While yet a child her parents' death and the destitution of her provincial existence throw her upon the corrupt environment of Paris which stifles her with loathing and horror; but it is soon seen an implacable temperament will ever overbalance her instinct to good, making every rebellion short-lived.

Her individuality is sometimes harrowingly alive, retaining sufficient flexibility that it escapes being totally immured by her one, irrepressible drive. Often enough she steps out of the shadow of ready-made perdition, shifting a little away from herself as the thesis-monster her authors originally essayed for her—proof that the essence of the character is an imaginative projection achieving sympathy, not a mere schematicism for interpreting fact. The facts *are* transformed, but dutifully exaggerated in the process. The authors wanted to serve Art and Truth without necessarily equating them; yet the unresolvable ambiguity of this departure compelled them, as artists, to cheat, with the result that truth is selectivized until it comes both to serve and resemble art.

The truth of *Germinie* is less scientificated than that in Flaubert, less primitively humanistic than in Zola. The Goncourts grasp the splintering world about them, but in this novel at least they reflect more than the Zeitgeist; more gifted as psychologists than as surgeons, they are bent on getting their heroine into a perspective where the old moral criteria can be still tactfully compounded with the revolutionary historical values: thus there is more to *Germinie* than case history.

Sober sponsors of the common man, they shy from sentimentalizing the victorious masses and the streets of Paris after the Romantic Hugo. The apartness of the heroine is uniquely stressed. She is a more ravaged figure than la Bovary, and there is an element in her crisis of personality altogether foreign to the bourgeoisie—violent and conscious self-immolation before every wound of carnality. Nor does she resemble in the faintest the virtuous-prostitute type then flourishing in the popular picaresque novellas and plays. By the time she has secured decent employment (early in the story), fortune has already spared her few known outrages. She becomes personal maid to durable old Mlle. de Varandeuil, characterized robustly as a secular saint. The two are temperamentally so unsympathetic that, though they grow devoted to each other, the girl cannot confide in her mistress, and at last deceives and despoils her in order to keep her lover, the heartless Jupillon, by whom she bears a child, the only being that brings her some happiness; but shortly it is dead, and from then on her life alternates between oblivion and desperation.

With all that, Germinie is more responsible and therefore less pitiable than Emma Bovary; she would certainly be more tragic were the religious overtones of her situation suggested with less equivocation. Here the realists stumble, failing utterly to make this aspect psychologically concrete; as creative moralists they are not quite disinterested. (Flaubert sentimentalized Catholic ritual as befitted a realist with a romanticist soul; not so the Goncourts, who, breaking in as utilitarian moralizers, come near to patronizing the confessionals as a temporary stay for a woman like Germinie.) Redemption would not be artistically desirable for Emma, but for Germinie the implication is that it would not be *morally* desir-

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able. The Goncourts plead specially for forgiveness by the living, and the whole burden seems to descend on poor Mlle. de Varandeuil: if only secular saints could learn forgiveness, what more would we need! It is this sly gratuity that affords the book its padded yet gruesome anticlimax.

Silver and Gold

TOWARDS EVENING. By Mary Hope. Sheed & Ward. $3.00.

By ELIZABETH BARTELME

THE end of youth, of the middle years, is the common dread of elderly people. The science of geriatrics has devoted itself to increasing the life span; social agencies wrestle with the problem of turning these added years to healthy and productive ends. But for every aged person with comparatively unimpaired mental and physical energies, there are a thousand helpless, lonely, perhaps frightened men and women for whom life holds no further possibility of accomplishment. It is to them that Mary Hope particularly addresses herself.

Through many years of caring for elderly people, especially the handicapped and helpless, Miss Hope has developed unusual understanding of the fears and trials of the old. She is not only aware of, but has experienced herself, the loneliness, neglect and feeling of uselessness that sweeps those of advanced age out of the current of life, leaving them stranded in situations with which they cannot cope.

In human terms the sadness of this is undeniable. Miss Hope, however, maintains that it offers an unparalleled opportunity for contemplation and the practice of perfection which, during the active years, may be pushed aside. She stresses the turning towards God that is the staff of the elderly, and mulls over the sources from which she herself draws inspiration and strength — the Gospels, the Office, the writings of the saints, daily Mass and Communion. She looks squarely at the fact that life must end only to be-

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gin again, and that old age is a time of preparation, not a period for regrets and bitterness at the inevitable. She firmly believes that the ebb of active life holds the seeds of a rich soul-crop, and to neglect their cultivation is to disregard the fact of eternity.

Although she has emphasized the spiritual in her journal, Miss Hope's writing is homely and revealing. She jots down her worries about friends who seem to her wrong-headed, her concern with those who suffer, the delight she takes in children. Her journeys in Europe, her memories of Cardinal Gibbons are recorded. She notes her pleasure in the initial success of a young writer, and the literary distractions in reading the Bible when she discovers a treasure trove of book titles in the Douay version, unmined by the tireless scavengers of the King James. She catalogues her collection of aged saints, carefully culling references to their infirmities and the manner in which they faced them.

No mystical guide, this, but rather a year's chronicling of the direction taken by a courageous spirit and an adventurous soul who, in confronting her problems realistically, has found a solution for them in the life of the spirit. Miss Hope's small book, the first of its kind written from a Catholic approach, will make many friends for itself among old people and those who care for them.

Diamond-Hard

A CHARMED LIFE. By Mary McCarthy. Harcourt, Brace. $3.95.

By JEAN HOLZHAUER

MARY McCARTHY's well earned reputation as one of America's foremost women writers is founded on a talent at once almost classic in its timelessness and strictly contemporary. A pure, cold, feminine objectivity that might have been unimaginable to a Victorian lady novelist but familiar enough to writers of both sexes in other generations marks all she does; her gaze is feline, ambient, and uncommitted. She sees it all, sets it all down, does not dispute, and seldom takes sides.

This November detachment has, of course, the effect of alienating the more feeling hearts among her readers—a type, incidentally, which she delineates with dispassionate perfection in *A Charmed Life,* in the person of Warren Coe. Coe would not like McCarthy novels at all, and would be baffled at finding himself in one of them. Miss McCarthy's detachment has also the effect of removing her stories, by a half step, from complete conviction. The author stands between her characters and her readers; tethered by her impartiality, we remain uncommitted, and see everything in the story through Mary McCarthy darkly—sometimes very darkly indeed.

This state of affairs, it seems to the present reviewer, is unnatural. Stories made of Miss McCarthy's material, a group of people who experience love, speculate and hate, are essentially dramatic. Normally such stories might be expected to evoke in us a response more emotional than our residual question here: do people like these, a townful with precisely these limitations, really exist anywhere?

Why, if her characters are not wholly compelling, is Miss McCarthy's writing admirable at all? Because of its superb draughtsmanship. Like even the more repellent work of Salvador Dali, McCarthy books depict a landscape never seen under the daily sun, while the technique of their presentation is diamond-hard, detailed, meticulous and exact. The truths she has to tell are half-truths, but they are quite exquisitely told.

A Charmed Life is a chronicle of activities of certain residents of New Leeds, a New England coastal town lately become a graveyard for minor artistic talent. The population is composed largely of bohemians and intellectuals running to seed: writers drinking over plans for great novels, artists with theories about the fourth dimension, middle rate actresses turned would-be writers, shopkeepers with Ph.D's., and plumbers graduated from Harvard.

This haphazard set read plays to each other, paint each other's portraits, share their spouses with or without benefit of divorce, drink, and ruminate, though never very deeply, about Life. Most of them are concerned in one way or another with being "totally honest" with themselves and each other. For want of a larger code, they pay constant lip service to this one, while at the same time finding a rationale in "circumstances" or "love" or "generosity" or even "indifference" for the most outrageous deceptions.

The life of the heroine, Martha Sinnott, is no different from the rest. Sometimes almost appealing in her semi-private examinations of conscience, she too is sidetracked by confusion of intentions and resultant self-delusion. When she becomes pregnant and is uncertain whether it is by her ex-husband or her present one, the solution she at once reaches for is a plan for abortion. Carried out, it would have been her second. The act is averted by yet another in the story's series of accidents, and the theory of the "charmed life" which somehow sees dissolute New Leedsians through their frequent crises is shattered.

Miss McCarthy is not without sentimentality. A few characters, not being intellectual, possess a kind of innocence, in a twentieth century version of "the noble savage"—a concept explored and exploded by Lionel Trilling in *The Middle of the Journey*. But Mary McCarthy's over-all effect is of thought rather than sentiment, and it is impossible not to admire the artistic integrity in this low-pressure view of life and its successful expression in terms appropriately linear and pallid.

REVIEWERS

William Dunlea, a frequent contributor to The Commonweal, is a free-lance journalist residing in New York.

Elizabeth Bartelme reviews for several Catholic publications and is on the editorial staff of a New York publishing house.

Jean Holzhauer contributes frequent reviews of fiction to The Commonweal and other periodicals.

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Children and Science-Fiction

CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP

LESS than ten years ago a new subject made its appearance in the Children's Book field—modern science-fiction. However, science-fiction is not new, not by a long shot.

Science-fiction for children has been a best seller in several countries for no less than ninety-two years. In 1863, in France, a book called *Cinq semaines en ballon* came out, the first in a series of more than seventy titles of science-fiction books to be published over a period of forty years, to the eager delight of successive generations of French boys, to say nothing of their fathers who competed, unabashed, with the youngsters for the family copy.

The author of this series, the penniless broker-bohemian-poet-musician Jules Verne, had taken his first manuscript to no less than twenty-one publishers who all turned it down. Hetzel, the twenty-second, took it. Hetzel was the greatest Children's Books publisher in nineteenth century France, a man of vision with a keen understanding of children. The success of Verne's books surpassed even Hetzel's expectations. When Verne died in 1905, eighty-two nations mourned his passing. This included the U.S. which Verne had visited in 1866 on "The Great Eastern," immortalized later in *La maison à vapeur*. Last summer a national festival was held in Paris for Verne's fiftieth anniversary. It turned out to be an international homage to the first science-fiction writer for children; the stunning exhibit included not only manuscripts, original first editions, life-size models of Verne's "inventions," but also copies of his works in all languages. Ambassadors of foreign countries together with the President of the French Republic, attended the formal opening of the festival where Disney's film "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" was given its French premiere.

Taking as a basis the scientific discoveries and applications of his time, Verne anticipated much that is familiar to us today: the submarine and the autonomous diving suit, TV, planes, the atomic bomb, the rocket ship, the helicopter. In his books one can find microphones, tanks, loud-speakers, publicity in the sky, artificial satellites, and so forth.

Though some of Verne's anticipations have not materialized yet, there is no doubt that most of the scientific data he used is now obsolete. "Verne!" says the American boy, "Phew! That's old stuff!" It is, but why is Verne still popular, not only in Europe, but all over the world? At this year's festival, for instance, the copies of Verne in Arabic, Norwegian, Russian, Hindu, and Chinese (to mention a few) were recent editions. Nor can this popularity be dismissed on the ground that boys who like Verne have not run across any new science-fiction. Some of the countries represented at the exhibit have plenty of modern science-fiction. If you add to this the fact that many descriptive passages in Verne's books run to wholly outmoded length, one must wonder why Verne retains universal appeal.

SOME fans of present day science-fiction claim to have the answer when they say rather patronizingly: "It is not the science that the kids are after in Verne's books. It's the fiction." It is true that Verne is a master story-teller. No one can spin a tale better than he does with delayed surprises, breath-taking suspense and mounting climax. But even his writing technique could not explain why he holds his own now when 'thrillers' are plentiful. His strong appeal must lie elsewhere.

The explanation is to be found in his deliberate choice of essential human problems for his heroes to cope with, gripping problems fit for generous men keenly alive to mankind's needs. Indeed, a close study of Verne's books reveals that, under different aspects, the same human concern recurs over and over again, namely, freedom. Freedom from war—*Vingt mille lieues sous les mers, De la terre à la lune;* freedom from tyranny—*Famille sans nom, Mathias Sandorf;* freedom from colonization—*Les enfants du Capitaine Grant;* freedom from slavery—*Nord contre Sud, Un Capitaine de 15 ans, La Jangada, l'Archipel en feu,* the freedom of the communitarian city as opposed to the technocrat totalitarian city—*Les cinq cents millions de la Begun.* In the last analysis, in Verne's books, men use science and technology not as an end in themselves but for the realization of age-old spiritual aspirations of mankind.

Therein lies the secret of Verne's perennial power to move the young. Many illustrious people have acknowledged their debt to Verne; among them are Savorgnan de Brazza, Lyautey, Tolstoi, Gorki, Byrd. But there are many boys of all nations whose names

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Mrs. Bishop is herself a well known author of children's books. Her most recent is *The Big Loop* (Viking).

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we will never know and for whom Verne was and remains a kindler of the fiery resolve within their hearts to do great tasks and to help free mankind. What more would a writer of children's books wish for? Does present day science-fiction, as a whole, convey that sort of inspiration to the young? We are told that American children devour modern science-fiction. Why not? Moon, Mars, Venus, new suns, rocket ships, interplanetary travel, space ruler, central control of the galaxy, breaking of cosmos records, use of the latest gadgets and discoveries, humanoids, intelligent animals, evil beings, and so forth. Even problem-mustangs and ghastly monsters. What American boy is not ready for one of these hair-raising adventures? Such a thrill!

But is that all there is to it? Just that thrill? When the book is closed does anything remain except a thirst for another thrill, so that the boy is led to 'consume' one thriller after another? Where is the mighty resolve for the profoundly human concern,

From "A Little House of Your Own" (Harcourt, Brace)

where is the generous hope caused to shine like a brilliant star in the heart of the young reader, a goal to man's measure? More often than not, concern, grandeur and humanity are left out, and the star of hope is turned into a glorified baseball diamond.

It should be a matter of concern that, so frequently, present day science-fiction takes a short cut to man's problem. Man's problem is an earthy problem, but in today's stories earthy problems are mentioned just long enough to let us know that they have been wiped out in a distant past. This is convenient, soothing, but tragically unsound and fundamentally uninspiring. To date, earthy problems still confront us and they will continue to do so because they far outdistance any advancement of science. If an African, an Asian or a European boy can still be fired with enthusiasm over Verne's books it is because therein men always fight for the earthy problem number one—the brotherhood of man in justice and charity.

There is no reason why modern science-fiction can-

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LAVINIA R. DAVIS. Illustrated by Jean Macdonald Porter. A donkey proves himself to be a good sleuth, as well as the best pet ever, when he helps two boys solve the mystery of the ghost of Wauramuag. Ages 8 to 12. $2.75

Pepys' Boy

RACHEL VARBLE. Illustrated by Kurt Werth. The colorful adventures of Samuel Pepys' page Toby, the Tom Sawyer of 17th-century England. Ages 11 to 14. $2.75

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not be a lasting inspiration to the young, provided it gives more than lip service to "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." On earth, this earth, Terra in science-fiction parlance. Heroes may go gallivanting anywhere, use scientific ingenuity heard and unheard of, increase physical possibilities to the nth degree, but let their efforts and sacrifices be in some way related to Terra, that it may grow steadily into a place where, as the Psalmist sang, "righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Far as this is from being realized, yet man's dignity lies in that longing which remains his most real and powerful inspiration. All the rest is froth, escape and even downright treason when it comes to youth.

At the entrance of the anniversary exhibit of Verne, a quotation from André Siegfried gave the key to the lasting universal popularity of Verne's books, and, at the same time, summed up the problem of science-fiction: "What is most important is to free the spirit in such a way that, physical ease increasing, it becomes more productive, but it is necessary that the spirit remains the objective."

A Selected List of Children's Books

BY CLAIRE HUCHET BISHOP

POETRY

Mouse Chorus. By Elizabeth Coatsworth. Ill. by G. Vaughan-Jackson. Pantheon. $2.

Delightful, small, quick verse about mice by a well known poet.

Laughing Time. By William Jay Smith. Ill. by Juliet Kepes. Little Brown. $2.50.

A picture book of gay, unpretentious verse and amusing drawings.

Welcome Christmas. A garland of poems chosen by Anne Thaxter Eaton. Decorated by Valenti Angelo. Viking. $2.50.

An unusual choice.

Poems of Praise. Selected and ill. by Pelagie Doane. Lippincott $2.75.

Short, easily memorized.

Imagination's Other Places. Poems of science and mathematics. Compiled by Helen Plotz. Ill. with wood engravings by Clare Leighton. Crowell $3.50.

Science, space, geometry and numbers sung and praised by poets from ancient time to present day. The wood engravings of a gifted artist add to the book's distinction.

Tirra Lirra. Rhymes old and new. By Laura E. Richards. Ill. by Marguerite Davis. Little Brown. $3.

A most welcome reprint.

PICTURE BOOKS

Charlotte and The White Horse. By Ruth Krauss. Pictures by Maurice Sendak. Harper. $2.

A perfect blending of two outstanding talents. A little gem of a book.

Crow Boy. By Taro Yashima. Viking. $2.75.

A childhood drama encompassed within a minimum of words and a few masterly brush strokes. A lasting creation.

Dancing in the Moon. Counting rhymes. By Fritz Eichenberg. Harcourt. $2.75.

A distinctive book full of irresistible colorful nonsense.

Switch on the Night. By Ray Bradbury. Ill. by Madeleine Gekière. Pantheon. $2.50.

Switch on the night and you are not afraid of the dark anymore! A wonderful idea which comes true all through Madeleine Gekière's imaginative pictures.

The Three Kings of Saba. By Alf Evers. With pictures by Helen Sewell. Lippincott. $2.50.

Helen Sewell's pictures offer a bold accompaniment to this simple and profound recitative of The Three Wisemen based on a few words of Marco Polo.

The Columbus Story. By Alice Dalgliesh. Pictures by Leo Politi. Scribner. $2.75.

Well written, simply and vividly, and the pictures look beautifully Italian and Spanish.

Lee Fong and His Toy Junk. Story and pictures by William Carmichel. McKay. $2.75.

Text and pictures have a restrained quality in keeping with this serene story of a small Chinese boy turned fisherman.

Mikko's Fortune. By Lee Kingman. Pictures by Arnold Edwin Bare. Ariel. $2.75.

The remarkable initiative of a lovable, tender-hearted Finnish boy. Cool northern pictures in keeping with the setting.

Pilgrim Thanksgiving. By Wilma Pitchford Hays. Ill. by Leonard Weisgard. Coward McCann. $2.50.

Simple text, good pictures and the real meaning of Thanksgiving as well.

The Happy Lion in Africa. By Louise Fatio. Pictures by Roger Duvoisin. Whittlesey House. $2.

The Happy Lion again, whimsically portrayed in text and pictures to the great delight of all those who have met him before.

Millions and Millions and Millions! By Louis Slobodkin. Vanguard. $2.50. . . . but only ONE you and ONE me! What wonder!

The Shining Bird. By Wanda Neil Tolboom. Ill. by Robert Bruce. Aladdin Books. $2.75.

The Arctic Circle and a little girl waiting to see her first plane. Picture story children will find appealing.

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Play with Me. Story and pictures by Marie Hall Ets. Viking. $2.50.

An exquisite book about a small girl looking for a playmate.

Beasts from a Brush. By Juliet Kepes. Pantheon. $3.50.

"Out of my head these beasts do come." What fantasy and what masterful brush strokes! And not one of these creatures frightening! For all ages. Limited edition.

Far into the Night. Story and pictures by Claire and George Louden. Scribner. $2.50.

Everyday life in Bali, artistically woven, in text and pictures, through the story of a little dancing girl.

Our Lady of Guadalupe. By Helen Rand Parish. Ill. by Jean Charlot. Viking. $3.

Simply and feelingly told and grandiosely illustrated by an internationally renowned artist. A book to cherish.

The Ugly Duckling. By Hans Christian Andersen. Ill. by Johannes Larsen. Tr. by R. P. Keigwin. Macmillan. $2.

In honor of Andersen's 150th anniversary a Danish illustrator gives us this classic, quiet picture book with a longing quality admirably fitted to the tale beloved by generations of children.

Chaga. By Will and Nicolas. Harcourt. $2.50.

Chaga the elephant becomes very small. A wise tale exuberantly illustrated.

Also recommended:
See and say, guarda e parla, regarde et parle, mira y habla. A picture book in four languages. Woodcuts by Antonio Frasconi. Harcourt. $3.

A Little House of Your Own. By Beatrice Schenk de Regniers. Drawings by Irene Haas. Harcourt. $1.75.

The Song of the Forest. By Dorothy Marino. Lippincott. $2.

Columbus. By Ingri and Edgar d' Aulaire. Doubleday. $3.

Bear's Land. By Nicolas. Coward McCann. $2.50.

Noah's Ark as retold and ill. by Tony Palazzo. Garden City. $2.50.

A Tiny Baby for You. Written by Nancy Langstaff. Photographed by Suzanne Szasz. Harcourt. $2.50.

Doki, the Lonely Papoose. Written and ill. by Mariana. Lothrop. $2.50.

All the Mice Came. By Robert Krauss. Harper. $1.75.

A Ball for Little Bear. An Ojibway legend. By Emily Brown. Ill. by Dick Mackay. Aladdin Books. $2.25.

The Fabulous Firework Family. Story and pictures by James Flora. Harcourt. $2.75.

City Boy, Country Boy. By Miriam Schlein. Ill. by Katherine Evans. Children's Press. $2.

The Little Sister Doll. Story and pictures by Laura Bannon. Whitman. $2.

EASY READING

Group I

Philomena. By Kate Seredy. Viking. $2.75. Twelve-year-old Philomena in search of her unknown aunt in Prague. Well written story to which the author's rich illustrations bring distinction.

Picken's Treasure Hunt. By Norman Davis. Ill. by Winsdale. Oxford. $2.50.

More about the courageous and lovable African boy Picken and his exciting adventures through the jungle.

Plantation Doll. By Cora Cheney. Ill. by Jo Polseno. Holt. $2.50.

Quaint and charming story about a long lost doll and two little girls on an old plantation.

Lions in the Barn. By Virginia Frances Wright. Ill. by Kurt Wiese. Holiday House. $2.25.

Young Clay Baldwin found it

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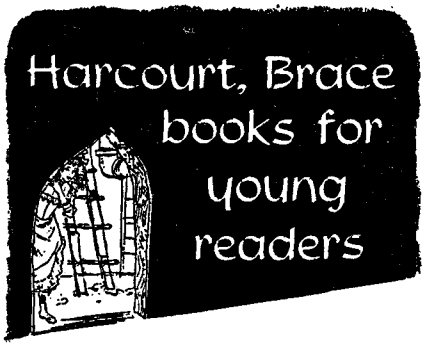

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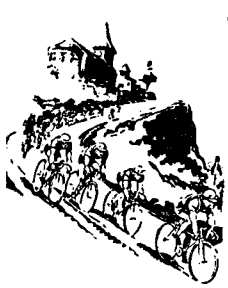

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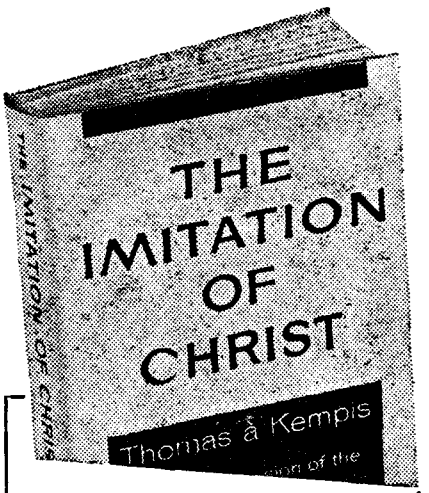

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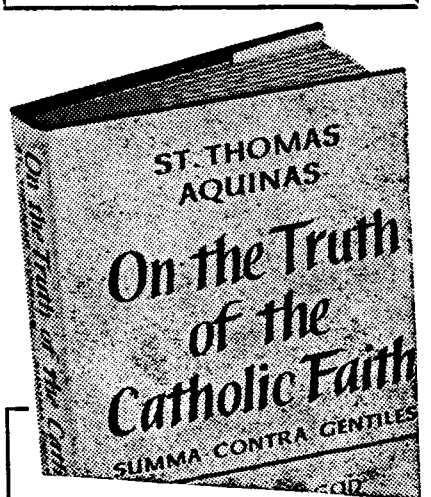

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